MARIONETTES

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FRANCIS MACNAMARA

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MARIONETTES

MARIONETTES

BY

FRANCIS MACNAMARA

Ἀλλ᾽ ὅδε τις δύστηνος ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδ᾽ ἱκάνει,
τὸν νῦν χρὴ κομέειν· πρὸς γὰρ Διός εἰσιν ἅπαντες
ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοί τε.

HOMER.

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1909

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SALUTE TO THE EMPIRE BALLET

"Seraphically free
Of taint of personality."
MEREDITH.

Of such supremacy what man
The height can say?
Fit honour only silence can
To greatness pay:

O aristocracy of art,
Forgive these vain
Attempts at praise, a lesser heart
Could not restrain.

Expression there as fresh behold
And rare as dew:
Which telling nothing, all is told
Of sweet and true.

Each stark convention like a flower
Is filled with joy—
The old delight of hard won power,
Which cannot cloy.

For only that can seem to be
Which nowhere lives,
(Nought but the mask reality
To playing gives).

Less wonderful in movement is
The serpent's tongue,—
Were no more tenderness than his
Men's works among!

O perfect form! a heart inspire
Has long adored,
That Truth may haunt about this lyre
As on that board.

THE LEGEND OF FRANCIS

"So all their praises were but prophecies
Of this our time."

SHAKESPEARE.

PROLOGUE

(TO THE MUSE OF HISTORY.)

Kleio, thou stern proclaimer—of the nine
Most constant, whose high office 'tis to assign
To deeds and lives of men such permanence
As have things made, which govern human sense
By licence of thy sisterhood divine :

Thee must he worship more than sounding lyres
Who the rough sweet companionship desires
Of those dead peers, who hunted went their way
For they could not respect to old limits pay
Nor rest upon the good which law requires.

Inspired by thee he sees the Spartan band,
LEONIDAS and his few heroes, stand
To wait five millions by the barren hills
Of Thessaly ; and grinding fury fills
His heart to see the traitor raise his hand.

Another passage through the hills he shows,
And swarms of Persians—who shall feed the crows
Ere nightfall—now descend on flank and rear,
Flogged on to meet the still undaunted spear,—
Which breaks at last, but never weary grows.

In Athens' splendid streets we by thy grace
May walk, and PERICLES meet face to face,
  Inquire into his plans, and passing try
  The judgment of that perfect sense-pure eye
On each creation of earth's sanest race.

Consummate statesman! others praise in thee
Thy courage eloquence and purity,
  Yet one at least has ever valued more
  Than knowledge of thy wisdom's endless store
Thy pattern of complete humanity.

The martyred GRACCHI cry from many a book,
We curse again the people who forsook
  Their over-bold defenders: fickle swarm,
  That gulped the tribune's hardly won reform
And bribes as greedily from traitors took!

We journey with the elder through the plains
Of Italy, and rage against the gains
  Built on the misery of many a home;
  We hear him shake the tyranny of Rome,—
We hear the mother when no son remains.

By history's light we see Judaea's crime
Which spoiled the earth of JESUS' life sublime;
  All that perfection as an ointment spilled
  Had wasted been, but thou a vessel filled
With Jesus' deeds, and kept it for all time.

Now when that faith in self we recognise
Again in some true worker, who defies
  The dignity of scribes, and even with blows
  The money-changer's table overthrows,
Now may we say: "In this heart all love lies."

And who would lose that tale of childish trust—
Hard soldiers vanquished by JOAN'S simple "must"?
"The English have no right to France!" she swore,
And brushed aside the scientists of war,—
When Orleans was near its utmost crust.

"In name of God the Wench commands take hence,
Ye English, both yourselves and armaments—"
Fearless as innocent, she made her luck,
And lived the Lilies from the mire to pluck:
Giving to Heaven and men one confidence.

COLUMBUS waiting, waiting first in Spain,
Or sliding grimly down the unearthly main,—
We read and wonder which the more to admire:
Sure, man's endurance never trials more dire
Endured, nor more achieved for smaller gain.

We fix our eyes upon the monument
His distant age by thy record has sent,
And venturous ones, who hear the coward's voice
In mockery upraised, may now rejoice
As knowing that his resolve they never bent.

Of all the voyagers in unknown seas,
Firm enemies of false divinities,
The boldest and the gentlest NEWTON stands:
Who laid upon the utmost stars his hands,
And sanctified to Truth their families.

Poorly could we his present estimate
Of freedom, did not thou show forth the state
In which dear Understanding, Hellas' child,
Since Plato's death by priests had been beguiled,—
Making us love the light acquired so late.

O treasurer for Time of all his best
And rarest work, in whose care ever rest
  Those well-wrought lives—props of our weaker selves,
  Now humble at thy shrine of many shelves,
Kleio, to thee I Francis make request.

Show me but four: a hero, poet, king,
And saint,—if such within thy reckoning
  There be that Francis hight; and I'll engage,
  No name of all the names upon thy page
Can of immortals claim a nobler ring!

Give me to see the moving form of each,
As when alive to listen to his speech:
  Shall not be wanting for a conference
  Wonders and questions,—break but thou the fence
Of ages, and the whole world I shall teach!

(EXPLICIT PROOEMIUM.)

FRANCIS BERNARDONE

(OF ASSISI, SAINT; 1182—1226.)

Scarce ended was my prayer to the muse,
When sudden lights my vision did suffuse
  Changing and fading, and dim figures came
  To stand awhile and vanish—none the same,
And I beheld in wonder countless views:

Till one at length of steadfast brightness stayed
And grew around me—now no more afraid,
For very day and no unearthly gleam
I walked in, trees and road did more than seem,
And summer sounds and smells came from the glade.

Cypress upon the hill and clinging vines
Proclaimed a southern land, with other signs;
While voices, where the white road made a bend,
Came mixed to me in richer tones than lend
The climates which a boundless sea confines.

Then all in grey twelve wayfarers appeared,
Whose garb undecked was matched by hair and beard;
A straggling band they came, some laughing loud
Some gazing at the hillside or a cloud—
Sudden I heard my name, and nothing feared.

"Francis!" I cried.—"Hail, Francis," said the saint;
And in the throng I knew the visage quaint,
In which now sparkled—watching my surprise—
The light of fun, that failed not in those eyes
When oft with hunger was the body faint.

"Come walk with us a little since so far
For our name's sake you came, and who we are
And what our common purpose shortly learn.
To Rome we go, we beggars are, who yearn
For riches not nor on the road a car;

Brother Bernard there in duty we obey,
Who leads us where of Heaven holds his sway
The Church's holy father,—for our rule
Of Christian life now at Christ's vicar's stool
His proper sanction humbly will we pray."

Thus spoke to me the famous reveller
And gallant of Assisi, who for fur
  Had taken frieze undyed, and showed the rest
  Of men, that having nought he all possessed,—
Which I who saw his gladness well aver.

Long ere to Francis' company I came
One thing perplexed me reading of his shame,
  Borne that he might than Jesus bear no less,—
  Why duty to the Church he should profess,
Whose rottenness most injured Jesus' name :

So taking now my chance I thus began,
" Twelve hundred years 'tis since the perfect man
  Taught men to live, and his apostles now
  Shameless before the world to Mammon bow,
From whom the first your former prophets ran :

But you the saintliest saint in Christendom
In fealty to that scheming court are come,
  Nor (fearing no man) ever yet were heard
  Against the Church's rule to preach a word—
Only because it is the Church, say some ! "

—" What better reason should I want? " he cried ;
" Rightly 'tis held most heinous to divide
  The force of common faith,—who turns his back
  On Church love of humanity must lack ;
Goodness on chosen ground is more like pride.

No thinkers we to make or to destroy,
But God's buffoons, and poverty our toy :
  Though well may new conditions be more kind
  To goodness, now more need is to remind
All men that bread is food and truth is joy.

By the next generation God will send,"
Now prophecy unto his words did lend,
  Though simple, wondrous beauty, "to make pure
  The hearts of men, a painter who shall lure
Sad eyes their own desires to apprehend;

And one (his fellow dear), by lovely song
Who shall make hatred hide its face and wrong
  Withdraw at last ashamed from government.
  O blessed pair, make haste to our content;
Humanity has loathed itself too long!"

—"Ay, Giotto came, and Dante, and some more:
But how," I cried, "shall such the world restore,
  Till science teach men how to look at paint
  And learning make them recognise a saint?
'Tis ignorance you first must kill!" I swore.

—"Brother Leo, say, are we not learned friars,
Our library the hugest, where no liars
  Are harboured?" Francis laughed, "With senses free
  And open to earth's unceasing verity,
We pass among the thistles and the briars:

'Tis prayer and study both, thus whole to yield
The soul to chancing beauties of the field.
  No other wisdom we are vowed to teach
  To men than bidding innocently each
To ope the heart by prejudice long sealed.

My noble Reason too much tricks has played
And now too oft my virtue has betrayed,
  That I should give much trust—Brothers, stop all!
  Before your clumsy footsteps crush and maul
Our little sister who has rashly strayed!"

A lizard in the road, no other thought
Possessed him now but toward the ditch it sought
To guide the creature, murmuring: "Little friend,
Learn to enjoy what weather God may send,
That by the sunshine thou may not be caught."

Francis now in his greatness I beheld:
The man who all man's raging pride had quelled,
Who entering churches stayed to sweep the floor
And cleanse the linen, loved the beggars more
Than lords, and by his love all hearts could weld.

The lepers shared his gathering of food—
Scraps flung from houses, man's contempt he wooed
Kissing in every street the loathsome hand;
Among their stinking hovels would he stand,
Whose very neighbourhood he once eschewed.

We pressing on again not far had gone
When Francis gave a shout, and "Ho Brother John!"
Said he, "Here's jolly work for your strong back:
The walls of yon poor house do sorely lack
Good limestone blocks and masons to lay on!"

Aside to me: "Thus man much better looks
Than puffing out his mind with windy books;
Lo in our order men of every trade,—
Are some who churches ere they sermons made,
Are potters smiths and carpenters, and cooks.

—Quick let us turn to heaving up the stones
That fallen lie, and more from whoso owns
A wall hard by we'll beg: only take care
For brother snail, who makes his little lair
And worships God in darkness unbeknowns."

Then as we sweated building up the breach,
"Francis," I said, "since thus appears in each
  Both strength and knowledge worthy of a wage,
  And no disgust of work restrains, nor age,
How still can you the poor for alms beseech?"

—"By restless watch and discipline unseen
We earn the takings that we seem to glean:
  The pattern of humility and love
  (Showing that Jesus is not lost above)
Our lives afford, is this a service mean?"

He spoke,—then all at once began to fade
The ruined church, the sky above me swayed:
  Grey hurrying figures blurred and voices blent
  In one retreating sound I knew, then went
My knowledge thence, through realms of Time conveyed.

FRANCIS DRAKE

(ADMIRAL; 1545—1596.)

When near as many years had passed me by
As in a year are days, my wildered eye
  And other senses now perceived more clear
  (As when a distance-eating train draws near
Some city, slowing up) the smoky sky

And noises of a self-sufficient age—
Verily lived they on no heritage
  Of wealth or fame, the famous citizens
  Who made this epoch glorious by their pens,
And with their weapons took a golden wage!

Old terrors of the sky and of the sea
Being scattered I beheld ; antiquity,
  While held in high respect, no bondage laid
  On men's imagination.—" Who's afraid?
Adventure! " thus came knowledge to the free.

Now glimpses of great ships I got that brought
From fairy kingdoms all of God untaught
  Burthens of gold to trouble all the earth,
  Jewels whose number spoiled the jewel's worth,—
And men who still for love of fighting fought.

But ever through this time when all were great
A murmur went of one so dedicate
  To valour, as to grudge a single hour
  Spent in security, yet in whose power
No enemy had suffered mark of hate.

He was a man, I heard, who did abound
In gentle virtues,—courtesy was found
  With dreadful promptitude, and sympathy
  With pride ; for skill in medicine and the sea,
And engineering works, alike renowned.

Much wondering of this pirate so adored,
(Who searched the world for danger, while aboard
  He pleased himself with music and sweet scents,)
  I listened where men praised his lenience
Or fortitude : whose words did soon afford—

Great pride and happiness to me to hear!
No more to seek his presence could I fear ;
  Bound by a kinship more mysterious
  Than parentage—the names which fall to us
Are bonds across the world and time more dear,

Gladly I came where I might see and touch
At last my hero. Loveliest longing much
Of youth's full heart and manhood's visioning,
Francis: me now my name to him shall bring,—
Francis shall never be another such!

I saw him as a lad, remotely, first,
Leading a party all for work athirst,
(Tired of the wasting idleness of school,)
To dam some Devon stream or drain a pool;
By every sober person loved and curst.

His hard apprenticeship and right good will
To serve the old mariner and learn his skill
Before me drifted; with his recompense
The hooker for his own,—his master's sense
Knew Francis must a destiny fulfil.

Impatiently—still ceasing not to slip
Through time's dimension, I discerned the ship
In which his first experience of the Main
And Spanish treachery did Francis gain:
To join him, I must watch another trip.

Once more I saw that England has an ear
For slanderers whose voice is ever near:
Drake a deserter,—all believed no less.
The ruined captain suing for redress—
Got England's gift to every pioneer.

Nombre de Dios! Honour wealth and fame
To one bold sailor in a morning came.
What price the doughty Spaniard? Sixty-one
A Spanish town as large as Plymouth won.
Success has legalised the pirate's game!

'Twas after, on the road to Panama—
Not when he climbed to see the ocean far
O'er which no English bottom ever ran,
But laid in ambush close, I reached the man,
Entering an hour determined by a star.

"Francis!" I cried, and "Francis" came reply;
The keen-eared Cimaroons perceived no cry
Disturb the noiseless night, though thirty lay
With half as many English by the way,
To catch the Spanish treasure trailing by.

He drew me in beside him, on my arm
Laying his very hand, which no alarm
Unsteadied, though that moment should decide
A higher stake than ever gambler tried;
'Twas death or endless wealth, and Drake was calm.

Each side the road—not opposite—they lurk,
The seamen sternly grasping gun and dirk;
Pulled over each man's clothes his shirt shows white,
To be protection in the gloomy fight
From shots of friends.—Alas for all their work!

Nought shall avail the counsels most complete
Of brave and careful men: enough to beat
An army is—nor needs it other tool—
The unhelped folly of a single fool.
Bad luck to Pike, who drank the rumbo neat!

'Twas thus. A cavalier from Venta Cruz,
With page afoot—as such fine gentry use,
Came trotting by; when in the very road—
Beyond our lair—a ghostly figure showed . . .
He galloped then, as one who carries news.

We noticed not the sailor's groggy zeal,
(Whose head the trusty blacks did soon conceal,)
  But heard the sudden gallop, Drake and I:
  "O God," he prayed—no time to seek a spy,
"This Popish treasurer, guard not his weal."

And then the expected mule-bells through the night
First sounded, and came clearer, till the sight
  Of loaded mules rejoiced the wanderers:
  Their captain's whistle blew . . . soon many a curse
The bags proclaimed of gold and emeralds light.

Spoiled of their well-earned spoil, and hard beset
With angry foes, they groan, and even forget
  To hate the wily horseman at whose word
  Was sent to spring the trap a common bird—
Their greedy eyes packed victuals only met.

But Drake swift counsel took. His men footsore
Could not those woods regain which veiled before
  Their progress: to the boats the shortest way,
  Though guards and fortresses between them lay,
He started straight,—and all to follow swore.

Marching that grave adventurer beside,
Whose brothers twain upon this soil had died,
  And thinking of the chance which always stole
  The meed each enterprise deserved in whole,
One flaw in his perfection I espied.

Though never captain won such fond esteem
Of those he led, still Drake must ever seem
  One quality of leadership to lack:
  Humanity has held for ages back
Of human virtues—luck! to be the cream.

By this perception I admiring less
But loving him the more made bold to address
A question : " Surely, Francis, little hope
You see with so much enemies to cope
And make your boats,—done now with weariness ?

If Venta Cruz were passed, the cruel land
Shall eat up one by one your little band."
—" Sure, Francis, means to you your name has showed
To bring unwilling hearts a weary road,—
Cursing with them the marshes and the sand :

By unfranciscan feigning seeming not
To drive them, yet inducing (cold or hot
The climate, hard the intervening miles)
My sailors to the sea,—by selfish wiles
Shall I bring hope into our hopeless lot."

—" Lives now," said I, as Bacon came to mind,
" A Francis of the greatest—who shall grind
The edge of reason long allowed to rust,
Whose wisdom yet shall not o'ercome the lust
Of luxury by thee so oft resigned."

Now silence on our party fell again ;
Trudging together, every nose astrain
To whiff a sentry's match—Lo I was swept
Out of their hour !—my star its measure kept
Too strictly. Next I saw them on the Main.

But dimly, as my passage through the years
Began anew ; the laughter and the tears
Of that great age, their victories sublime
And failures—than the triumphs of our time
More glorious—rang faintly in my ears.

That latest vision ere my sense did fly,
How shall it e'er my gladness magnify!
A virgin ocean blazoned with the name
Of Francis; o'er the grave of Spanish fame
The name of Francis carved upon the sky!

FRANCIS VILLON.

(POET; 1431—?).

Now back and back toward that age again
When men unlearned proved that life's worst pain
Not labour is (nor man to labour loath),
But joy denied for profit—truest sloth—
Our burden, which we still increase in vain!

Back I was borne, but short of that serene
Contentment of true service—even between
Two joys—the yoke of time again I wore:
The faith which made the builders was no more,
Unborn the joy of knowledge I had seen.

So high in six-score years can manhood rise,
So low descend—too low even to despise
Its unattempting brutishness or do
For doing's sake a stroke, the pious few
Choking who hold the mirror to its eyes!

Such was the world in which my sense stood still,
Dismayed I cried, "What, Kleio, wilt fulfil
Of my request in this all-heartless quag?
Not courage love or truth so late would lag—
Temples, sure, they have none in all this ill!"

Out of the fields and streams, from the warm sun.
Clear in the rustling trees, came answer: "One!"
I walked a high-road then, alone just where
All blind I was transported by my prayer:
More voices gathered whence they had begun.

"One temple have thy gods, one stronghold sure:
For one pure soul in this expanse impure
Works, and destroys his life to work no worse.
Justice and truth walk in the perfect verse,
Who nothing make must characters procure!"

"That Francis," I replied, "who shall restore
Its dignity to language, lacks a score
Of years yet of his fated time of birth!"
The Rabelaisian feast—that gift of mirth
The world is truer for—rose up before.

But answer followed from the beauteous day:
"Thy eyes shall see the fountain in whose spray
A hundred poets stand, and oft has drunk
Its living waters that same mighty monk,
Curving to earth in ballad and bright lay."

A whistling now I heard, and shuffling feet
That felt no joy the great high-road to beat:
An absent whistling as a throstle's song
That sings and stops so sudden,—warped by wrong
Man's heart will rise unknown the sun to greet.

Then passed me looking sideways such a wretch
As still are made in prisons: scarce would fetch
Envy from freezing curs his tattered coat,
His matted hair would shame a stabled goat,—
The man was shamed (I thought) his hand to stretch.

Yet in the foulness of his face a flame
And glow appeared, his eyes flashed once and shame
  Took me. Then o'er his shoulder beggarwise
  He chanted: "From the gallows Francis flies,
The best of friends must part!" I heard the name . . .

—"Stop, Francis!" indignation oft before
Desired this chance, "That name none ever bore
  Before the world disgracefully nor shall,
  But you to theft and vices sensual
Are vowed, till every Francis seems a whore!"

So spoke I, knowing quick that I had met
My poet, and uneasy for the bet
  I made with all the world at history's shrine:
  No pride I felt to know his name was mine
Who crept unloved to exile—Oh, forget

My meanness little knowing: soon the choice,
Hearing his answer, made my heart rejoice.
  "Some men make verses some heroic lives
  To hold the ideal Truth, another strives
In paint or chiselled stone to hide a voice:

The hero or the saint you praise the same
Although no verse they perfect, why defame
  The poet who neglects to model deeds?
  If ever working I my body's needs
Have cared for, Francis, I accept your blame."

—"But theft," I said.—"But life, that is a plea
Stronger than Law: which Law denied to me.
  I chose to live, because to live I know
  The best of living men; all wealth they owe
To him who can on earth make beauty be.

To those who lack the sense of foul and fair
Is given power to take—and nothing share
With hungry bodies and more hungry souls ;
No picklock in our craft's most glorious rolls
Aspired (I ween) to steal the earth and air ! "

—" A pretty moralist ! " still hating I
In idiot conceit at him did cry ;
" How often, Francis, do you stand to preach,
In market squares or where the rustic beech
Grows green, to honest men your envious lie ? "

—" Is there a merchant," flashed those eyes at me,
" Keeps falseness from his sales as rigidly
As Francis Villon falseness from his rimes ?
Is there a priest so strict to observe his times
As I to measure lines religiously ?

None ordered e'er so righteously his days
As I my ballads, none such painful ways
Pursued in hope his virtue to enchance ;
No saint that ever walked the realm of France
More constantly despised the common praise ! "

—" Then why abandon pride, which moderate
All wholesome is in high or low estate ?
There is a decency," I pitying taught,
" Which man to God at least to offer ought
Failing his image kept immaculate."

—" The pride of wealth, the pride akin to rage
Of valour, the cold pride of lineage,
The pride of luck and beauty, and most proud
The pride of abstinence—of pleasure bowed,
Flaunt I as plumes upon a single page !

There is an aristocracy more strict
To spurn the vulgar use and means unpicked,
  Than nobles know, who know but one degree;
  The pedigrees of words and dignity
Of singing-forms no herald can depict."

—"Only the pride of manhood," now less sure
I argued, "lack you from your portraiture:
  Work we love, if the workman is a man."
  —"A funnel for the truth!" he fierce began,
"From service nothing now can Francis lure:

Fain had I once in honour, as the rest,
Indulged of person, and in life expressed
  My love of life: but smit with love of love,
  At once all weakness I was raised above
By such a lowering of the manly crest."

—"Oh Francis, now your tale can I at last
Deny with good disproof: though love has passed
  And left you sore, belief is yet as strong
  And stronger in the life which wrought you wrong,
The glorious earth yet holds your heart as fast.

My ears are true and hear you now in tune—"
In grief I spoke that he must vanish soon—
  "With changing greens and music of sweet smells,
  That waste their spirit not in long farewells,
Flamboyant beauties of the summer noon!"

—"What do I care—" the banished villain sneered—
"For trees? For suchlike shall I trim my beard
  And oil my speech—as who knows better how?
  These foreign pleasures are they solace now
For Paris, my domain where I am feared?"

—" Ay, Francis, have your laugh! though now you would,
You could seem nought to me, poor rogue, but good!
And well I guess, with Paris in your heart
Another name goes still, from all apart,
More fragrant truly than a poplar-wood."

Coldly he spoke: " One name of sweetest sound,
Rarest of man's invention, I have found,
Katherine: if ever Katherine de Vauxelles
Seemed lovely, to the name she owed the spell,
I was a poet ere I grew love's hound."

Francis I lost again: to Francis borne.
Seeing a light in front the sky adorn—
The great spirit aflame of earth's sole king
Who kingship justified, I turned to sing:
" Angel, had you but waited for the morn!"

FRANCIS VALOIS

(Of France, King; 1494—1547)

No greater space of time I traversed now
Than Time to man to die in does allow:
Children I knew had grown and shrunk again,
And still were breathing. Kleio, I did gain—
Not leaving France—another realm, I vow!

On the same road where passed me broken down,
(A prudent pious king then wore the crown)
Tortured and lone, a man of those it needs
A century of births ere each succeeds,
I walked with face toward the insatiate town.

I through her patient fields to Paris went,
And going talked with rich and poor, intent
To understand their happiness to serve
A heedless waster of the people's nerve,
Who monster revenues on pleasure spent.

And first a little lawyer I o'ertook:
"How like you your King Francis?" Cautious look
He sideways threw, but I ingenuous
"Unstable rather?" saying, he broke out thus:
"More easy never winds a poplar shook!"

—"Is that so? Pity, pity!" I exclaim.
Then he: "Patience or reason to his name
Shall ne'er be joined; no argument is good,
But flattery his will has ne'er withstood.
Kingship he makes a pleasant idle game!"

A priest now joined us: "Here," my lawyer cried,
Is one will praise for you the monarch's pride!"
—"To rob the Church of what from God was hers
And give—both wealth and place—to gamekeepers!"
The grinning priest cared not his mind to hide.

We reached a cross, and parted. Hurrying on
Where late a group of villagers was gone,
I soon caught up a straggling child and heard
Their rugged laughs, which seemed to bring me word,
In these shall Francis have a champion.

The women answered first: "But he is brave!
Quick-tempered too—so may all men behave!
And sweet his speech as great his chivalry!
Rather than two good harvests I would see
Our Francis sit his horse—whose soul God save!"

The young men laughed and said : " The wondrous ways
The court devise enjoyment I would praise ;
  Life seems the more worth living if but one
  In life has realised the whole of fun ! "
I asked, did not their taxes more amaze.

—" Our homes are poorer but more rich our dreams ; "
An ancient spoke, " possession easily seems
  One's own when every precious thing is there.
  Those who the models for our dreams prepare
We pay, and none the tax too heavy deems."

—" A generous man and trustful ! " one cried then,
Not as his ministers, themselves not men,
  With silly cunning binding men to rule :
  'Tis confidence that frights the knave and fool."
So each declared according to his ken.

Entering alone his Paris, each complaint
I vowed to tell, when I should be acquaint
  With Francis, which his people spoke in dread ;
  Methought it all more shortly had been said,—
Perfection gone to waste by unrestraint.

Unquestioned through the palace now I pass,
(Whose splendours were not hid from lowest class,)
  Till the rare features unmistakable
  Beholding, enter I his wardrobe full
Where leisurely he views some works of brass.

" Francis, hullo ! " he gave a royal shout,
" What brings you to these times ? Perchance 'tis doubt
  Of what a man—so far from you—is worth :
  Here may you see what men in all the earth
Are making best, their power may praise or flout."

At once I made objection: "Well I know
Your care of those who common minds outgrow,
  But, Francis, for the most to do the best
  Is justice and a ruler's proper test;
You raise the high and trample on the low."

—"Think you a higher place to kings allowed
To know the heads on common level bowed?
  No: since the multitude cannot discern
  An overtop, of them their best to learn
Is one on platform set above the crowd.

No duty to my subjects else I know,
But pleasure made complete on earth to show:
  Did I deny a single natural lust,
  I should betray as king my people's trust.
Their proxy for enjoyment, this I owe."

—"Is this, is this then all a sovereign's part,
To study hunting, love, and costly art?
  Shall I take back," said I contemptuous,
  "This message, saying 'Francis teaches us. . . '"
—"Say 'Francis asks if in your swarming mart

One workman lives with hand and heart as true
As all in Benvenuto's retinue!'
  Ask if your commerce has produced a man!
  Then lay on human sovereignty your ban
If money gives of worth a juster view.

Oh ho! your freedom well I understand;
'Tis laws relaxed, which bind the workman's hand,
  Not saving—by a fiction over-awed—
  True works from works of servitude or fraud . . .
From hence the cost of cheapness I have scanned!"

—"The beauties of the ancients," speaking rough
I left him, "still for us are good enough."
Who laughing roared: "So said the ancients ever!
When Pericles bade Pheidias to endeavour,
Said all 'Can eyes prefer this modern stuff?'"

Magnificently then did I confess,
That none we had whose best was not far less
Than the rejections of those hands divine.
—"In every generation, yours as mine,
Pheidias," he swore, "again takes consciousness.

Man is but man; by my humanity
I know the great ones, giving without plea
Freedom and power to masters of their age.
Perfection in the market gets no wage:
So sparrows recognise but one degree."

—"Good though the work be, is the man so great,"
I asked, "who serves your house to decorate,
As mighty lawyers who maintain your peace
Throughout your realm, or—who your realm increase—
The leaders of great armies daring fate?"

Gravely he answered: "Francis, know, the mind
Which beauty can create is not confined
By any learning's limit: perfect sense
Of justice, with intolerance of pretense,
Only in mighty makers kings shall find.

Fitness of things through life with passion sought
Made better worth to Florence when she fought
The artist's hand than war-trained engineer's;
'Twas Buonarroti's bastion eased their fears,
As strength to Paris my Cellini brought."

—"Francis," I said, "among these spirits pure
Some of our family are found, for sure?"
—"A painter, yes, who brings within my walls
The fields and growing trees, him Francis calls . . ."
—"Stay, greater things shall bear our signature!"

In pride I cried, "Holland and after Spain
Shall see with eyes franciscan, both shall gain
An understander rare of common things:
Come Hals! And fly the time till Spanish kings
Shall suffer gladly Goya's great disdain!"

—"Oh cease," he groaned, "the present still is rife;
What has a king to do with future life,
Whose heaven is given now and help is sworn?
No thought have I for dead men or unborn,
All, all I owe to those now in the strife."

Once more my vision sinks behind the fence
Of years. Now he is gone my heart relents,
And fain would call him back to give the praise
It grudged him living. Francis, take thy bays;
For excellence is love of excellence!

Sad am I now for each that I have known
One hour in lives remote, yet will not moan
My separation, since I now have eyes
In this life saints and kings to recognise:
By this much wiser, Kleio, I have grown.

EXPLICIT LEGENDA FRANCISCI

MOSES

"But no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."
DEUTERONOMY.

By Heshbon ruined, Israel sat down :
A straggling camp pitched on the Amorite ground,
With no commands against a morrow's march,
No watch to keep,—to hunted sons of slaves
From all the miseries of the earth, what bliss
To sleep unterrified ! No sound all night
But munching and clipping of the wretched herds
Upon a real pasture ; goodly reek—
In nostrils sick and sick of manna-paste—
Of smoking homes and Canaanitish blood !
Now could a man more easily endure
To think of Edom, who closed in brutish pride
The easy road from Kadesh : driving back
The weary tribes to seek the desert pass—
And whiten with their bones the range of Seir.
Was time to dream—and know it was a dream—
Of endless sand, and striving to surround
Mountains which move in the night as far again ;
The uncompassable bounds, and Edom's spears
Turning to poisoned snakes, and that insane
Courageousness of a man forbidding men
To lie and die . . . Moses was resting here :
Who rested last at Kadesh of the streams,
Where many, who crossed the Arnon feeble-worn
And hopeless, walked as proud as the waving palms.
So nigh the Jordan's banks good pasture was,
And sweet at last security from war
By day and night,—the people rested long,

And made an art of rest; while Jordan flowed,
And Hittite shepherds trembled as the fame
Of Moses' victories spread, increasing. Then,
His moment being ripe, the master called
Joshua to his tent beyond the lines;
A muttering went,—"Joshua with himself
In the tent of meeting, long they talk alone."
And long they talked; till issued both and bade
A muster of the tribes, to learn a song.
When from that dreaded beard there flowed a stream
Of words to hear more tender than the dew,
As Moses sang of fields and early hopes
And ancestors; but as he swelled in praise
Of harvest-lands free-given to the race
And every blessing promised anciently,
He saw that race forgetful of itself,
And chiding them his gentle song was lashed
To fury,—while all Israel listened mute,
The aged voice called out for sword and blood.

But Joshua dreamed, and scarce could order his troop:
For not one song, but the beginning and end
Of all song, that day within the tent,—
His own most awful power—the master showed.
The secret strength of poetry was a sword
In Joshua's hand, wrenching to be upraised,—
To strike as it had stricken in Moses' grip:
"Let every battle be ordered as a song,"
Had Moses said, concluding that dread charge,
"And thou in turn shalt brush the hills aside,
Fold up the sea, and make this people move!
Shall my lieutenant lack, when I am gone . . . ?
When I am gone—" now Joshua had forgot
The reason of his instruction in the might
Of man when man—But what had Moses said?
"My moment, mine! now must I disappear:

Or mar the effect on Israel of this dance
Which I have danced always before their eyes
Since I returned to Egypt at the death
Of that great Raamses,—who left for us
A feeble tyrant, good to lead the applause
And stir his slaves to proper astonishment
At Moses' acts. Now by that nicety
Which timed my wand's appearance in the path
Of Pharaoh, I perceive (nor dare to lie),
'Tis time to take myself from Israel's sight:
A mortal now must perish, that his life
Wrought to a poem for ever may exist.

In the rocks of Pisgah I shall rest, there hide
My unnecessary figure; none of men
Shall see again, when this sun shall have set,
Me walking on earth. In thy charge, Joshua,
I leave this people whom my love so long
Has harassed: keep my laws,—I once had dreams
Of Israel a people ruled by songs
Sung by themselves in joy of beauteousness,
By laws unwronged. The desert shattered many
A fond imagination. Now so near,
Though fain my weakness be to spoil my work
By entering with my people Palestine,
Fear not, Joshua; never shall thy command
From me have let, this life elaborate
For good or evil is thrown upon the world.
Lead boldly, and the sense which made me more
Than man and turned all nature to my use
Shall carry thee——"
"Lord Moses!" Joshua cried,
And clasped the aged knees and wept and cried.
Astonishment before had tied his tongue,
A cry for mercy 'twas that now cut short
That unrelenting tale: "Lord Moses, spare

A feeble heart which loves perfection less
Than life or thee!"
"The leader of his race
Living within himself devotedly,"
Came short reply, "may not expend outside
That single certainty his love or strength;
Make much of self, that thou may offer much
In service to thy race. Moses is gone:
Already, man, thou standest by thyself."

Then Joshua rose and soldierly addressed
His leader, begging respite ere he face
Changes which but to contemplate before
Had terrified. "When thou hast won so far,
Lord Moses, first created then endowed
This nation rich and free, thou canst but take
Thy minute of reward,—thy sole reward
For sufferings unimaginable. None
Will praise thee more, or bless the sacrifice
Of such long looked-to joy. Thy people need
For their rejoicing an example of joy;
They will more thank——"
"How little, Joshua,
Thou dost for all thy loyalty apprehend
The meaning of my life: for thanks or praise
Had Moses danced, would Israel now be camped
A nation free, in sight of Palestine?
Nay, Joshua, though thou plead to move the stars,
Desire is much more eloquent in me;
Indignant charge or tender argument,
Thou couldst use none my heart has not usurped
Long since and brought to batter my resolve.
Nor, hadst thou better knowledge of the work
To perfect which I die, wouldst thou expect
To move me: thou the autocrat hast seen,

But Moses shy, unknown, the stammerer,
Impractical, with him thou'rt not acquaint,—
To him I make this sacrifice of life."

To whom made answer promptly Joshua:
"'Tis said, from childhood thou hast never known
The grip of fear, nor any natural lust
Allowed to rob thy labour; weariness
Nor hunger nor the common love of fame
Has ever hindered Moses from the course
His greatness visioned."
Answered Moses slow:
"Not fear!—didst never hear thy father speak
Of Goshen and a murdered taskmaster,
An Egyptian killed in daylight? What but fear
Could string to such a desperate deed a slave?
Nay, had I been an equal slave with them,
Familiar with their speech and manners, whipped
And starved with them, unbranded favourite,—
How soon had I awaked the nation's soul
And stirred that heart, my cursed timidity
For years could not come near to! Pharaoh's house
And court, where I uncontradicted grew
To manhood,—such a mould could scarce turn out
A figure formed to touch the imagination
Of that sore-burdened race. I walked ashamed
Among the brick-kilns and the sweating gangs
Of Hebrews, who my agony noticed not
But only saw a kinsman come to laugh
At their distress. And all the time my ears
Endured the sound of the lash—that ceaseless sound
In Goshen, and my flesh bore twentyfold
The pain of every tortured Israelite.
A frenzy, (such as only takes the meek
And shrinking ones of men,) impelled my arm
To snatch a pick and all in one blind rush

To split his head, whose cruelty had made
A victim of the helpless labourer—
The heir elect of Israel; how he dropped
Stone dead and how some hurried shovelfuls
Of sand concealed the corpse, till Pharaoh's men
Came seeking their lost officer and one
Of the chained slaves in terror told the name
Of whom? the princess' pet!—'tis an old tale
The murmurers love to tell. I fled, thou know'st,
By way of the sea to Midian, and remained
An exile from my exiled people until
Some other king walked daily by the Nile.

A score of years a shepherd,—'tis to say
An easy thing; but, Joshua, there to await
Was harder than 'tis now to disappear.
I felt the stirring of my power; at night,
In lonely places, when I watched the clouds,
I felt great forces pull, and tremblingly
Imagined I was great. The giddy hopes,
Despondencies absorbing reason and sense,
Which agonised my waiting! Oh, to know
Whether 'twas greatness made me dream beyond
The possible, or was I but the vain
Conceited stammerer as men declared?
'Twas then I took the dark-skinned desert-child,
My Zipporah; to whom the hills and sky
And distant sea seemed only made to serve
The use and will of Moses. Many flocks
Her father owned, which minding all those years
I learned much shepherd-craft, and all the tracks
Of Horeb made familiar and the streams
From sea to sea, their periods of drought
And torrent. Oft she said, 'Thou'lt need it soon,
Thy knowledge of the landmarks, note them well;
An army lacks the sense of sheep to find

Its own necessities.' O Zipporah,
Ambition should have ended but for thee
In vanity, thou mad'st my greatness great!
She stayed, thou know'st, with Jethro when I went
To Egypt to my people,—know'st thou why?
'I'll wait thy coming, Moses, at the head
Of Israel victorious,' she cried,
'Thou'lt come the quicker knowing Zipporah waits!'

Nor did I see my woman again before
This people watched the mists of Sinai.
O hearts and minds of men, could find offense
Even in the sweetness of devotion!—Days
Had hardly grown to months since Zipporah came,
When in my house I heard rebellious sounds,
That she-cat Miriam snarling at her blood:
Enraged I rose, and spoke the dreaded spell,
And Miriam a howling leper fled.
Then all my house cried mercy, promising
Duty to Zipporah whom Moses loved.
O conjurers of Egypt, who employed
My lazy youth,—whom I defeated since
In Egypt at your proper practises!—
How often have I blessed the hours I gave
To learn that art your fathers perfected
(But now, too fine a weapon in your hands,
You bungle with); but never was more glad
Of curious skill than when to Midian came
The fame of Pharaoh's death, and I foresaw
Myself confronting Pharaoh to demand
Freedom for every Hebrew in his realm.
Whose sufferings were as vivid in my mind
As when I writhed among the scenes and sounds
Of Pithom,—now for courage I rehearsed
In the backside of the desert, to my sheep,
Those lessons which the court magicians taught

So unsuspectingly ; I proved my power,
And wrestled with that shyness—dreading more
The going among my people to arouse
Some lively rage and shake their wantlessness,
Than bearding Raamses' almighty son."

He paused a space, by recollection rapt
Of those inglorious struggles dearer now
To memory than triumphs rather name
Than self had won, and Joshua dared to ask :
"Thou knewest, Master, Aaron's winsome speech
And manner to the vulgar admirable,
And at thy first return didst use indeed
His proffered aid, but likedst it not, and soon
Requiredst not his speeches to the folk,—
Of such advantage cheating thy own cause
That many (as I have heard) by that believed
Thy splendid arguments were made to gain
A selfish popularity : wilt thou show
What purpose—for thy servant's lessoning—
Led thee in that unequal strife to waste
Thy surest force ?"
"What thou hast heard is right ;
My object was that very popularity,
Which Aaron captured every dinner-hour
With casual jests, but I the more I strove
To win it only magnified contempt."
The awful face of Moses seemed to break,
And what was more the memory of a smile
Than laughter's living child sat in the seat
Austerity this many a bitter year
Had ruled in unrelieved ; but Joshua pained,
"If thou hadst given to self or then or now
The common care or portion of thy thoughts
Which every mortal owes at least to self,

Had'st thou been to the instincts of the herd
So odious?" He protested, "Oftentimes
Have I proclaimed thy purity of mind
In camp and on the march, but never thought
With thee to make dispute turned slanderer.
Nay, Master, for thy people's liberty
And glad home-coming every step and breath
Was taken in thy devoted life: in vain
Thou makest such confession to instruct
Thy servant Joshua,—he believeth not!"

"Now shalt thou understand," made mild reply
The worn contented lover of Israel,
"This wretched person of Moses, which I loved
As little as they, was now a precious sign
Worshipped for what it stood for, as a king;
No longer a man, I only saw myself
The symbol of my people's patriotism,
Which more than life and pleasure they must love
And hold in reverence. Jealousy became
For me a sacred duty, men's esteem
The noblest end—by whatso road attained.
Before all Egypt and her Hebrew slaves,
So purposing, I reckless matched my skill
With those masters to whom the whole world looked
For leadership in magic; by that sense
Of opportuneness I made simple deeds
And accidents seem marvellous,—the man
Whose meekness was a joke, who walked with eyes
Fixed on his toes, did for his pleasure play
With storm and pestilence and wrath of kings!
For all the while I crept about, I watched
The change of wind and sky, the growth of trees,
Men's faces and the coldness of a word
Or warmth; I measured every shifting mood
In men and things. Nor strove my rivals less

To observe the points of vantage : but the time
For silence and for speech they ne'er could learn,
For holding back and standing in the way,—
The smallest seemed the smallest differences
To those too wise professors. Trick for trick
The Egyptian and the Hebrew played at first,
And little notice Pharaoh or his slaves
Had payed, but that persistent timeliness
Like long unvaried drumming entered in
And stirred their souls to wonder ; laughter failed,
Indifference such art could not withstand.

And every season's pest did soon appear,
Even to the old inhabitants of Nile,
The conjuring of Moses ; frogs this year
Increased because the Hebrew waved his rod,
The river rotted, from the marshes rose
Marsh-flies and went again at his command.
The cattle died,—if cattle why not men?
I dared not grow less daring ; any pause
In the giddy dance which swifter ever growing
Held fascinated Pharaoh—bringing me
The long sought admiration of my race,
And quick the charm had left their eyes unblurred—
Well able to descry beneath the dance
The dancer's art. I faltered not until
With one last whirl I carried Israel
Across the bounds of Egypt : paralysed
The Egyptians helped their workmen to go free,—
Too late did they repent with threats and force,
Their over-burdened slaves had got at last
Their memory back, a nation knew itself !

Though on the road their murdered spirits shrank
From hardships not the hardiest of men
Could bear unshaken, and their thoughts fell back

To Egypt and their fish-fed servitude,
My influence prevailed, they dropped the stones
They had gathered for my death. Now every glimpse
I gave them of my person, every word
Silence and absence, was considered, judged:
About the form which ne'er was shown for nought
Grew mystery and fear. So held we on.
In finding water after a day's march,
In skirmishes with hostile desert-hordes,
I kept myself a perpetual spectacle;
By arts of management I whipped and soothed
The childish tribes. Till we devised that last
Supreme contrivance, on the mountain-top:
Dense clouds of smoke, and from the midst a blare
Of trumpets, whelming all the senses,—man
Walks not on earth that could receive unmoved
Such argument, men women children bowed
In awe of a composition more sublime
(I think) than ever Egyptian magic soared!"

Here Joshua, wondering greatly that he showed
No pride nor any mention made at all
Of that his greatest work and benefit,
The Books of Law, indignant for his sake
Made protest thus to Moses: "But the Law!
That splendidest creation of thy love,
Sweet growth of thy compassion blindly given
To wretched men, that mastery made complete
By service blessedly unjustified,
That grand accumulation from a mind
Of pure wisdom formed, that lasting strength
Of Israel,—nay, Master, no advice
Nor parting adjuration's tender force
Can turn the eyes of men from gazing at
Nor tongues from praising such a monument
Of free-given labour long and beautiful."

"Words, Joshua! fat and pulpy images!
Thy swollen speech reminds me of the Law,
That mad machine which I must bid thee guard."

"Thou hast a channel made in which the lives
Of unborn generations, like a stream,
Shall flow contained, whose bubbling passions else
Had over-flooded every virtuous growth;
By strong anticipation thou hast checked,"
So Joshua pursued, "whatever lust
Shall gallop o'er the multiplying race.
And mildew at the heart thou hast expurged
By such severity as makes appear
Even cruelty a virtue.—Wilt thou still
Dispraise that sweet and perfect instrument,
Thy love's bequest to Israel? Naught shall rule
That race for ever but the sacred Law
Of Moses, prophet king and fellow-man."

So spoke the ever faithful son of Nun,
Then stopping blushed that love him had impelled
To use such boldness in the very tent
And to the face of his giant counsellor:
Even as he waited for the winged reply
To transfix his uncertain figurings
Of loyalty, the canvas lifted sharp
And gave a glimpse of the main camp beyond,—
The same light breeze brought up a well-known sound,
The voice of the agitator. Moses heard,
And answered Joshua's protest with his eyes;
Then softly uttered to his captain old.
"In life I failed, and proof of failure leave:
The Law, which ye shall keep eternally
To mock my martyrdom. (Nay, stint thy grief;
All failure lives victorious by my death!)
I hoped, thou know'st, to save this race unique

From government by fear: in that despair
Which made me leave the principle and try
To reach the idea from another side—
By multiplying cases hit the truth,
I told myself that all the wrong and false
By studious fiddling might be perfected,
The human heart be measured in a book . . .
And so those rangle-tangle precepts spread,
Book after book fulfilling, ever more
Opposite to that justice absolute
To ensample which I laboured at my life.

With other heart the ordinance I enlarged
Of tabernacle service: curiously,
By strict direction gathering into one
Perpetual form the appearances of priests
And attitudes,—more potent to control
Men's minds than straight command, by penalty
Soe'er severe enforced. Thus to devise
The accoutrements of worship soon became
Day's sweetest business: every proper rite,
Each pattern loop or gem contributing,
Particular lamps and vessels,—none so mean
But had my heart. The holy ark itself,
The cloth of blue and covering on the march
Of softest badger-skins, its sanctuary
Dark-curtained giving the inaccessible air
The multitude adore; the space between,
The sprinkled water fitting men unfit
And silver trumpets' summoning,—all combined
To rule the savage thing my poetry
Had raised and led so far. The gorgeous tent
Was part of that same dance which Pharaoh watched,
Its furniture was bells upon my toes
To hold the people's wonder: purple and blue,
The great laver of brass and candlesticks,

The brasen flesh-hooks, offerings of oil
And spices rich, the poles of shittim-wood,
The vestments sewn with gold—a mystery
Of needlework, all bells around the hem,
(Bells and pomegranates in sweet alternation,)
And weighted with as many priceless gems
As Israel had sons . . . O Bezaleel
And Aholiab, grand artificers,
Faultless of touch, of fancy passing dreams,
For your embroideries that blazed like flame
Around the priestly robe, for wood and brass
Made glorious by a cunning hand, I loved
You fondlier than this heart to mankind vowed
Has ever loved a man!"

Then Joshua,
As understanding came of all the plot,
With lust of action filled, forgot the loss
Of face and person dear, beheld himself
Devising battles, lifting with the force
Of beauty men and mountains from his path,
And thus exclaimed: "The towers of Jericho
And Jordan's ancient stream shall not avail
To save yon pleasant country from the seed
Of Jacob, who demand their heritage!
The words thou spok'st today shall be a sword,
While I survive, to cleave the foes of truth
And magnify thy memory; my command
Shall be one long obedience to the scheme
Of life, which in this tent hast handed on!"

Thus boasted he, while Moses listened proud;
But pausing, spoke again with doubting voice.
"But, Master, as thy life's perfection stands
Explained, and most in clearness wonderful,
Fain would I ask the meaning of one cloud
Appearing in the flame of justice. Love

So bound thee to thy Midianitish wife,
And made thee keep her always: yet 'twas death
By thy command for any Israelite
To harbour such." He shut his lips, ashamed;
But Moses smiling gave him answer straight.
"I like thy eagerness, but more I like
Thy comprehending blame,—ah, Zipporah!
She gave for men the value to my deeds
Who showed the doer weak: what help should be
In tales of conquest where no chance appeared
Of failure? Thou hast seen,—do not despise
Too readily thy own humanity.
Now she is dead, else I could not endure
This bloodless walking out of life, when life
Is lovely with the darling hopes of youth,—
This secret murdering of infant joy.
O Palestine, I must have pressed thy fields
And laughed to spoil my work, had she but sighed!
Well well it falls, that ere the final strife
Her presence ceased to gild and rarify
The gift of life, for this my blood declares,
I could not die were Zipporah not dead!"

He ceased, and pious silence Joshua kept,
And all his being bowed before the form
Of tragedy, which stalked within the tent.
Then was that order sent throughout the camp,—
A muster of the tribes to learn a song;
And Joshua dreamed, while veterans quailed again
Before the music of that mighty soul.
'Tis said, at times the face of Moses shone.

JOHN BAPTIST DEPRECATES

No, thanking you for good discipleship,
I cannot feel, to your pride I owe so much
As that I should indignantly compete
With him whose messenger I am to men;
No, though in honest jealousy you spoke,
And flattery rare was given in your reproach,
I do refuse by the simplest miracle
To save my fame as prophet. Jesus draws
To his baptism great crowds, you say, who once
Had all been glad—and but for manners of mine
Needlessly offensive still would all be glad—
To honour me. Well, granted, it was rough
To greet the rich religious citizens
Who braved the uncomfortable desert to bow
In rapture at my feet, with "Vipers! Toads!
O scaly generation!"—and unwise.
(I thought that I was Balaam? No, I play
At being Elijah; imitate no other.)
Small wonder, Andrew and the others left
So unreasonable a prophet,—you complain
That now they laugh at your loyalty to me—
'Tis well my joy's not in my own success!
My friends, were I indeed a greater man
Than this young Gallilean whom I blessed
Coming to my baptism in duty meek—
By his own greatness taught for order's sake
To fulfil so much—what need had I to strive:
Whose every imagination then, each place
I stood in, word I uttered, thought conceived,
Being mine could but seem beautiful? What help,

If I were born less great, were care immense
To make my name sound sweeter in the world's ears?

My answer grieved you when came emissaries
From Jerusalem, with power to catechise
"Yon crazy hermit"—that the Church might know
What attitude authority must take
To this new fad of baptism: "Not the Christ;
Nor Elijah, never dead, returned at need.
Nor even That Prophet."—"Who are you then can
Confer a blessing?"—"Say, I am a voice!
A voice crying in the desert—crying Prepare . . . "
My motto from Isaiah I added then.
Verily the man in whom is sense of truth—
Who recognises just and sweet wherever
In men or things they hap, conning no rule—
No man is, but a means impersonal
By which all men may reach their unknown selves.
A voice, a mirror,—names are all the same
To such: how could my answer seem so rash?
Impatient yet you argue, that to win
Men's souls one first must catch and keep their ears:
Wherefore for truth's own sake it were more wise
To conciliate somewhat casual listeners.—
Give men a taste for fish by sparrow-food?
Mix truth with untruth, till they love the one
For t'other's sake? Well, could I see as you,
I never had set up as prophet at all,—
With so much wisdom, should I care for truth?

Strange, that it vexes you when Jesus takes
My sermons and repeats to innocent crowds
The aphorisms I taught: if they be true,
Shall truth be served by our monopoly?
Nor proves it—let your insolence attend—
Inferior him who imitates: the first

By an accident of time is not made great,—
Invention through the past the future finds.
If aught I gave to that original soul—
Aught of this art of being prophet taught,
Myself I got in copying the chief
Long dead exponent: all my days, even dress
And food, are as I read Elijah's were,—
Me you have not for this called insincere—
Even this leather girdle at waist he wore.
What, you're ashamed to hear me now confess?
Then let Elijah make you more ashamed,
Who copied all from Moses! Only his end—
His spurning death—he managed with less art:
Which, splendid with the heavenly chariot,
Did not by its time so emphasise each act
And word of his life, as Moses' vanishing.
As he to Ahab, I to Herod shall go,
My enemy too shall be the whorish queen;
Only I doubt if mine shall be the power
And courage to contrive a Carmel. Friends,
Your prophet shall die and leave no masterpiece.
'Tis well my joy's not in my own success!
What did I tell the priests' men? "One there stands
Among you, whom you know not. Following me
He is in front, coming after goes before."

If I have any destiny, 'tis to throw
My destiny away and clear the field
For him you urge me now in rivalry
To preach against. What prophet's skill have I?
You know my faculty,—do I look the one
To take a people? Next day's sun or rain
I hardly know: which Moses underground
Or blindfolded had hour by hour foretold,
Elijah never issuing from his cave
Had known as certainly, and Jesus knows,—

First simple acquirement of the prophet's trade.
If still you cannot distinguish of us two
The master, watch our deaths: when Jesus dies,
There shall be circumstance to strike the world,
But I for lack of artistry shall make
Some silly ending. Speak till then no word
Against a man, the latchet of whose shoe
I am unworthy to stoop down and unloose.

HERMES ON BEHALF OF HIS OWN

(To St. J. H.)

O father Zeus, on this my day—
Fourth of the month, which ere our sway
Declined brought ever sacrifice,
From men the freely given price
Of my goodwill,—in presence here
Of all the gods and every saint
By thee uplifted to the sphere
Of heaven, I Hermes make complaint:
Reminding thee what nice affairs
My sleight has managed (unawares
Of all except, of course, the world),
As when my drowsy fluting curled
In sleep the monster hundred-eyed
Whom jealousy devised somehow
To guard from thee the lovely cow—
Her priestess Io, since thy bride!
Not now the first time I rehearse
The wrongs done to my worshippers—
The genial rogues, who homely pace
The high road and the market-place,
My territories now shut to me!
And ask thee on the sort to frown
That weighs the nimble spirit down—
To fight well able cunningly,
Or fascinate with pleasant speech
The one that it would over-reach.
Hard times these for the man of whims
And moods, the unconforming unit:

Not dancing nor the sweetest hymns
Nor my own lyre, how well he tune it
Can move a people who profess
Dishonour worse than tediousness.
Alike is used, but no respect
Receives, that confidence unchecked
Which tips the horse to win the race:
(The lucky I inspire by grace
Of thy, my brother's grant to me,
Apollo, when I stole thy kine,—
The humbler forms of prophecy.)
A decent person must confine
His understanding like the rest,
He's queer who lives by doing his best.
And now the virtues in demand
Are indoor ones, as manners bland
And thrift and law-abidingness
And modesty—my shaggy son,
Poor Pan, must peep at from recess
The mountains where he used to run.

Thus men from sanity have erred,
Till by a fiction most absurd
And barbarous themselves they bind:
By this religion sin's defined—
To take from an antagonist
Advantages which he has missed,
And 'tis proposed that men contend
Benevolent as friend with friend!
Conversely, play is over-awed,
The chase a laughter-checking rite;
'Tis shame to play the play's a fight
Or practise any pretty fraud.
So is it in the daily round,
The unfantastic so abound

Who sell themselves to business. . . More
Than pleasure profit they adore,
And enter into bargains, not
For sake of mixing in the mart
With men, but for what may be got;
Till free and human men of heart
This great machine will scarce allow
To pick a living anyhow.
The turn-his-hand-to-anything
Man, over learning quick to spring,
With subtle makeshift always ready,
Is now distrusted as unsteady.
Alas for those, my faithful few,
Who love their fellows and fresh air
Than money-credit more, and care
As much for class as noon-day dew!
But where the most indignity
I suffer, in that country, see!
Men will not in the public street—
Because 'tis public—sit to eat.

So industry, by nature meant
To wait upon good taste, is lent
Improper virtues and esteemed
As something of intrinsic good;
And theft a sin is only deemed
When it requires some hardihood.
The ones who keep, good laws protect;
While those who take, the same expect
As those who do not take. . . To be
Is held in courts of law no plea.
Yet look what men in any land
Achieve above the might of all:
We may their finest labours call
Selections from what was to hand.
Of all ye lords of mind and sense,

Whom immortality contents
By means of understanding pleasure,
Fastidious only without measure :
Now sympathise with my disgust
Of this new cult, which first denies
That any new thing can arise
Then loud insists production must
Be free from borrowed wealth, and prates
Of what the labourer creates!
Which personality will praise :
Even while their battle-cries resound,
That power only in these days
Is in association found.
Oh, well know we, and well know they—
The seers silent 'mid the din :
It is the highest man can win,
To throw identity away
Becoming part of what his time
Is venturing to do sublime.
And since to make to thee alone,
Lord Zeus, and none beneath thy throne,
Is possible, most benefit
That mortal does to mortals bring
Who learns to pilfer with most wit
And please his taste in everything.
No thanks, but scorn, the world him gives
In godly idleness who lives ;
Did not whose grumble intervene,
Possession must subjection mean
To values of caprice or dearth
In no way relative to worth,
And all the crafts unruled by sense
Become a riot of pretense.

Accumulations, such as wealth
And history, desire in health—

And no ambition have more fond—
To serve the dainty vagabond
Or casual poet, seeming blessed
If either have their toil possessed.
Who could the myths of Egypt bear,
Before their gross all changed to rare,
Assimilated by a base
Deceiving idle tasteful race?
And what were we the gods, before
The Hellenes stole us to adore?
Now since of beauty good's the end,
Not beauty's author to exalt,
To use the means can be no fault
Another chose, nor him offend.
Provided none more apt be found,
'Tis vanity if man refuse
To borrow that which others use,
And immorality profound
By reason of the loss thereby
To beauty, whom he serves,—say I!
Though at cross-roads this too long while
No wayfarers, for my good fame,
Fling stones upon no growing pile,
Yet pride still twinges me, the same
As all you heavenly characters:
Whom all I charge with me to curse
The sluggish breed, which hates the light
And covers with a slimy blight
The tender shoots that struggling tree
Would now send forth—humanity.
Appeal with each persuasive art
To Zeus, to let his anger fall
On my insulters: for my part
I shall not tire of giving all,
When he his thunderbolt has hurled,
Safe-conduct to the nether world.

AGNUS DEI

A skipping, sucking, lamb-faced lamb!—
You stole from some old dithyramb
To startle me this April morn!
Nay, can it be? Are lambs still born?

A quicker way there should be, much,
The market to supply with such:
They are produced by chemistry!
And none the difference can see.

You still compete—imagining,
Because you are, you'll seem the thing?
When you are so inadequate,
No wonder God is out of date.

THE BROOK

A river singing merrily
'Tween little cliffs of moss and fern,
No thought of what before may be:
If streams but knew,—well would they turn?

I hear him gossip with the reeds
And jokes or grievances relate,—
To all he is the man of deeds,
Tremendous in a little spate!

And is this all the river's song?
Do the returning waters keep—
Though parted from their god so long—
No memory of a song more deep?

A LITTLE GIRL UNHAPPY

I wish that I were buried,
And the earth on me pressed;
For I am very tired, and would
In the wet earth have rest.

O fairy of my bedroom,
Who hast oft laughed with me,
Weep now,—and turn thy child into
A toadstool 'neath a tree.

A toadstool which the fairies
And frogs shall dance around,
The little green frogs in the grass,
To a wee fairy sound.

For there shall be a music
In the silence of night,
And wood-nymphs in the empty wood,—
If thou but give me sight!

ABROSUNE

In so much loving, Love,
I ne'er would touch thy being with common words,
But always held in leash my rampant song:
Now reason yields to thee,
O beautiful and wise above the world.

Which of the hundred gods
That men have placed in heaven, in heaven could dare
To fashion such complete beatitude?
My beautiful and wise,
I tremble with the weight of wonderment.

Well if the gods conspired—
In jest or for a snare of mortal pride—
To make thee wise and beautiful for me:
I'll take the gift in full,
Nor fear to dip my fingers in the stars.

O Love, if love should die,
And thou, my wise and beautiful no more,
Should spill thy hair about another face,—
My wonder still should stand
And awe of thy unearthly joyousness.

O beautiful and wise,
To me for aye by chance or by desert
Belong the joy and terror of thy love;
My praise is but the voice
Of one who walks and babbles to himself.

HYMN OF THE NATIVITY.

I

Peace in all the world!
The marvellous sweet joy
Of her triumphant fills the meanest thing;
Fain are the beasts to sing
And tell that now is born, is born, a boy!
Shrinks envy back,—
That presence unashamed today the world shall lack.

II

Mary laid on straw
Can touch at last and smell
The body which a burden was so long;
Though faint, she still is strong
To explore the sweetness which in her did dwell.
Crash empires down,
The world—this little warmth—she holds beneath her gown.

III

Mary tell to all,
As Joseph thou hast told:
"This child begot of love has come to you,
No love but love I knew,
And love is God's own self," speak Mary bold,
"Question not more,
But prone before such beauty bless the man I bore."

IV

Frankincense and myrrh!
The tyrants of the East
Indulge for once a joy to kings denied,
As throwing off their pride
They worship—'mid the litter of a beast.
Hearts ever strange
To pity at the thin cry of new life so change.

V

"Incense for a sign
Of holiness shall be,
And gold, my son, for token of a king;
Sepulchral myrrh they bring,"
Said Mary fearless, "for a victory.
Birth cries to death,
And doers e'er have taken shorter lease of breath."

VI

Rumours of the air
And little words of chance
Her greedy ears received and nothing missed;
The head in quiet was kissed
Once more for each new-gathered esperance.
Night's wonders show
The wonder of this life which out of love did grow.

VII

Often to her breast
And aching teats she guides
The merciless small darling mouth—Oh, rare
Reward of pain and care!
Glad day, how conquering joy now pain derides:
Shines through the dun
And murky stable lo! a light not of the sun.

VIII

Crowds for shelter come
Of strangers mixed and odd;
Silence, as of an empty house, is made
When in the rack is laid
The human fragment newest torn from God.
Sleep early, late,—
Rude strength can but consider thing so delicate.

IX

Did Augustus know,
When forth went the decree
To count his subjects, that a man was come
Outvaluing the sum
Of Roman wealth from the orient to the Sea?
Laugh Mary dear,
Hiding from such an emperor half his empire here.

X

Deep in earth the flowers
New beauties meditate
And finer blooms for Mary's feet to crush,
When the green life shall gush
From fields and trees now sad in winter state:
Forth mother then,
And show the daffodils a perfect flower of men.

XI

Mary throned in joy
Eternally we praise:
Is not a day but Jesus newly born,
In bed of straw forlorn,
Beneath a star, the blessed mother lays.
Thrice holy feast
Of Christmas, ever on earth thy honour be increased!

CAROL OF JESUS CHILD

"What danger, Mary,
Imagining
To those infant cries
So quick dost spring?"

The lovely lady
She rocked his bed,
She laughed to herself
And singing said:
"Lullay, my love,
By by, lullay,
I fear the darkness,
I fear the day;
A body so quaint
With heaviness
(By by, lullay)
The air might press.
The ground such lightness
Beneath might rise,
And my floorling sweet
Throw in surprise.
Danger is waiting
By hearth and by way,
Lullay, my love,
By by, lullay."

—"If soldiers bristled
In all the trees,
And a tempest each morn
Were hid in the breeze:
No harm could threaten,
Nor hatred wrong,
The child who is kept
For sufferings long.
Who are born to sorrow
God guards well aye."

—"Lullay, my darling,
By by, lullay."

ODE ON LA TORTAJADA

> "As nature wept, thinking she was undone,
> Because she took more from her than she left,
> And of such wondrous beauty her bereft."
>
> MARLOWE.

What is this day of fears?
The poets, who shall ride upon the years,
Before this blazing dawn draw back in drea
The image-mongers of the earth are fled;
For all their stock of wonder and delight
They must this day behold
Shrivelled and shrunken with a sudden blight.
A beauty unforetold
Has struck the drowsy eyes of Poetry!
Who vainly now invokes the land and sea:
The pride of song is taken unawares,
And what remains but prayers?
O all you treasures of the earth,
That man has chosen since his birth
To honour and to glorify,
Come out of land and sea and sky,
You beauties rare and curious:
Oh, come and help our helplessness!
If all of precious were arrayed
And all of good the earth can yield,
Some faulty picture might be made
In which to send a vision sealed
And safe to men of other times
Of what now foils all common rimes.

Figures and fancies often penned
Of day and night,—the whole sea tribe
And woodland favourites—attend
In all your richest to describe
The sum of all man knows of joy:
Which out of heaven some wicked boy
But now has in a godly rage
Flung at an unappropriate age.

La Tortajada!—I have seen
Life's very essence caracole,
Appearing in substantial sheen:
All sweetness in one perfect whole
Being gathered, what is left to show
To those who would this wonder know?
Oh! they were right to run away,
The poets and descriptioners;
Well might I bow my head and pray,
About to immolate my verse.
And did I think that all earth's best
La Tortajada might suggest?—
Go back, you wretched images!
The mass of you is beauty-less:
In vain you waves have hurled yourselves,
In vain you leaves have danced and died,
In vain you woods have sheltered elves,
You summer winds have kissed and sighed.
Empty and dull you are to me,
For I have in my memory
A vision of more high delight,
A sound more sweetly intimate,
A smell by which I know the gate
Of heaven has opened to this wight,
Who rashly mixes words to tell
What lies behind the sentinel.

Earth's splendour, which did dazzle me,
How is it faded suddenly!
Now must I call my pleasure's queen
To praise the pleasures that have been;
I'll light at her magnificence
The stars that have grown smoky since!

The grandest wave that ever fell,
Filled with divine force of the sea,
Did move as if it would foretell
La Tortajada's energy;
The sunbeams sought to flash alarms
Swift as La Tortajada's charms.
The curve beneath the breaker's crest
Was copying the sacred cloth
Which tasseled like the ocean froth
Wraps round La Tortajada's breast:
To watch it from that proud breast fall
Had made the cliff so straight and tall.
Oh, all the sea and all the land
Cannot such rivalry withstand!
The rose is full of subtlety,
With charms of hue and smell and shape,—
How vainly does it try to ape
That power which has so maddened me!
From out La Tortajada's hair
It rises on the quivering air:
A mystic potency unseen,
Engulfing every living thing
That ventures near the gorgeous scene.
The hardest cannot 'scape the sting
Of that unearthly happiness
La Tortajada wields,—unless
He die, poor heart, of joy too great
For man to bear—or celebrate:
While yet I live, let me make end
Of slandering what is reverend.

ODE TO A STOPPEUSE

(In Shaftesbury Avenue.)

While the ladies in the park
Struggle for a chance remark,
You sit here
Sewing, dear,
Happier than any lark.

Envy not the sky-lark's spree,
Thinking that he is more free :
If his day
Be more gay,—
He must dread satiety.

Maiden, only you can smile
At that mocking demon's guile ;
He may let
Us forget,—
'Tis but for a little while !

We who pass you in the street—
All intent that foe to cheat—
Still will swear
In despair,
That our liberty is sweet ;

Even feign to pity you
For the work you have to do.—
How you might,
Angel bright,
Pity us if but you knew !

Oh! believe me, never queen
Had, to spend her leisure in,
Fairer bower;
Never flower
Graced so well its leaf of green.

Look at us who stray outside,—
Fortune is a treacherous guide,
Promising
Each to bring
To the visions of his pride.

From your narrow window send
Sometimes glances to befriend
Such as me
Who can see,
Child, that you have found the end.

You no more like us need cling
To the joys the seasons bring,
Never long
For the song,
Never feel the ache, of Spring.

Doubt and change disturb you not;
As a naiad in her grot
By the stream,
You do seem
To enjoy your happy lot.

By your rare serenity
You have made this street for me
Hallowed ground,
Where I found
Oft a glimpse of Arcady.

Faithful service, you have shown,
Brings to all the joy you own;
Any man
This way can
Win content,—save me alone.

Could a service paid and bought—
Any work of ill report—
Give me rest
From the quest,
And the wasting strife of thought:

Gladly would I bow my head,
Leave the glories of the dead
With the strife,
Live for life,
And a slave become instead!

Nay, from ease long since I ran,
Truth is under Fortune's ban;—
Do I miss
Fortune's kiss,
I the solitary man?

Poets, sempstresses, and kings—
By the changeless rule of things—
Sit alone:
Hard the throne
Of the one who sews nor sings.

PANEGYRIC ON
GEORGE WARRINGTON STEEVENS

(Died in Ladysmith, aged 30.)

Even as the vase's form
Old verities of man's first consciousness
Fair-swelling doth express,
Nor can the years remove with change's storm
Its beauty from the changeless heart of man,
So stands the balanced mind:
By thinking with each master though refined,
Serene as ere philosophy began.

Seems manhood now to rot?—
Not unaccustomed are to lives sublime
The country and the time
Which Steevens bore—and knew his greatness not!
Intimate with humanity, as few
That knowledge rare can gain,
And by his larger kindness more humane,
To judge a poem or battle well he knew.

Bring to his sanity,
As sculptors of hard imitations oft
Perplexed will hold aloft
Beside the pile some shape from purpose free,
For trial every truth-usurping claim
And creed and system raw—
Making the common taste, not truth, their law,
And shrieking in concupiscence of fame.

Purity by his life
Is proved—no plea to excuse unmanly ways,
Who turned from easy praise
To worship beauty in the heroic strife;
And bravery unconfessed more lovely found,
And tirelessness though mad,
Than reason much refined into a fad
And action by the dread of phrases bound.

He died, his work being done;
Nay think not, had he filled with precious lore
Of volumes yet a score,
Shedding his light of sense where'er the sun
His rays has shed, or (blessing rarer yet)
Our roofs and pavements old
Had touched, and all our city turned to gold,—
Yet say not weeping, he had swelled our debt.

Nay had his work been nought,
His life was perfect at his earliest breath:
Let men not weep his death
Who laughed himself, by ancient heroes taught—
His close-acquainted Romans, whom as well,
Had he been born the first,
He had ensampled how to hold accurst
One hour of life when life from honour fell.

SONG OF MORNING

Oh! who will up and run a race?
The early sun is beaming;
Such hours of brightness are too rare,
My lads, to spend in dreaming.

Come out! and leave your dreaming!

Shoulder to shoulder let us stride
Across the dews of morning:
While others hug themselves in bed,
Morn's misty treasures scorning.

Have pity on their scorning!

Come out, and you shall look upon
The fir-tree's morning glory,—
Such wonder as you never found
In picture or in story.

'Twould overflow the story!

The beauty of a virgin world
Is yours to take and ravish:
Think not that noon or evening is
Of lovely treats more lavish.

For you the earth is lavish!

Into the coldness of the lake
We'll wildly plunge together,
And dripping on the shore we'll run,
And bless the summer weather.

Oh! snatch the fickle weather!

The air, the birds, the flowers, the sky
With me have joined their voices:
How can you sleep when everything
Awake on earth rejoices?

The city street rejoices!

Oh! who will up and run a race?
The early sun is beaming;
Such hours of brightness are too rare,
My lads, to spend in dreaming.

Come out! and leave your dreaming!

THE BLUEBELLS' WEDDING

(To W. F. I.)

One fiery noon when I had wandered far
By copse and stream and ferny hill,—where are
The rich abodes of many a haughty fay,
(Whose idle pleasure oft it is to play
Some strange and lovely scene upon the sleep
Of heartless men),—within a meadow deep
I sank, and soon was dreaming wondrously:
Some fairy, sure, contrived that dream for me.
For first my ears did hear a clarion note
Of sweet unearthly tone, which seemed to float
Upon the sunshine—summoning all the joys:
Then sudden o'er the sward a troop of boys
Came dancing into my delighted sight,
Bearing a banner gorgeously bedight.
One glance I spared to read the legend gay,
Which told this was the bluebells' wedding-day,
Then on those forms of lovely life my eyes
I fed and feasted; while their shrilly cries
Did tantalise my ears, and every sense
Aroused to joy in life's sweet opulence.
Now all about the field they ply their fists
In pretty sport, the tender amorists,
Tumbling in savage freedom everywhere;
Amid the flowers rise shocks of yellow hair
And limbs and bodies—piling up delight,
Their glistening bellies round and rosy-white,

And underneath a-quiver as they run
Their tiny ornaments. (The mighty sun
Embracing all the earth had overpassed
A flower so dainty, but the rascals cast
A jolly net to snare the heedless rays :)
The riot ceased, and facing several ways—
Their little paunches thrusting forward bold—
The dears made each a slender bow of gold,
Gladdening the thirsty earth and winning straight
The homage of the heavens with that bait.
Sun-kissed, the precious emblems seemed to smile,
As not unconscious quite of future guile.
Now proudly take they up their flag again,
To await the arrival of the bridal train :
A regiment to make the manliest heart
Throb in beholding drawn up for its part.
Upon their chests a-heaving, here and there,
One drop of sweat shone like a jewel fair.
Keenly I felt in looking on that scene
Life's generous force : which moves in all things green
And nude and true,—with hope for other days
And rich fulfilment of old promises.
The trampled blades rose sadly, as the boys
Gave over bruising them with pranks and noise.

Enter a chariot ! drawn at reckless pace
By twenty joy-o'erflowing lambs, in chase
Each of another, love, delight, sunshine—
Picked younglings of the flock to be the sign
Of envy's absence, sorrow's shutting out
From this high festival and summer rout.
(The laughter of the lambkins' tails would fright
Hypocrisy,—such worshippers of light
All revelling in licentious innocence
Would quickly drive the long-faced liar hence !)
A lovely load, I vow, the car did bear :
Heaped up and splendid, filling all the air

With woody fragrance, challenging the sky
To match that simple perfect blue (the eye
Of fair-haired summer),—all the bright bluebells,
Companions of the bride from woods and dells
And distant meadows culled, and hither brought
That Love's designs with honour may be wrought.
What matter that they die to-morrow morn,
So their perfection's given to adorn
The services of life in life's own fane?
Each would be plucked a thousand times again!
Slowly with patient growth each single bloom,
Knowing and dreading not the flower's doom,
Had come to beauty: nursed by earth and air,
And sweet wood-girls, who run by night and care
For grieving birds and every tender thing
Beneath the stars. (At dawn's first glimmering
They fade into the trees, and few have seen
Their forms or faces: only a better green
In grass or fern some morning greets the eye,
Upon some lowly bloom a lovelier dye.)
The bluebells were enriched by many a draught
At night from those delicious fountains quaffed—
Of crouching figures, gentle warm and wild:
The earth (who loves as truly every child
Of hers) the lucky bluebells brighter dressed,
The pixies' speeding feet more softly pressed.
Their care was not in vain: for every flower
Was picked, and dies triumphant in this hour.
But where now is the bride? And how shall she
Be brought upon the scene most worthily?
Now they, Love's lovers, all expectant stand;
And fondly watch the eyes of all the band
(But cannot pierce the chaste protecting gloom)
A willow grove,—the bride's attiring room.
Lo! from another side, swifter than light
Or death or fancy, flashes on their sight

A single swallow! Like a dart he flies
Into their midst from out the utmost skies:
Oh wonder, on his velvet back repose
The blissful pair!—What joyous clamour rose,
All running through the meadow to admire
The bluebells' pride! Then in the sky the quire
Of Love's own singers poured forth such a stream
Of song, as never even in fairy dream
Engulfed the soul of love-despising man:
A thousand thousand larks at once began
The wedding-hymn,—and every earthly sound
Was fain to stop and listen. To the ground
The music fell in showers so heavenly pure,
As might a merchant from his profit lure;
The only gift it was the guests did bring,—
No queen, I think, got finer offering.

To company the bluebells through the sky
There flew no painted moth or dragon-fly,
But humbly rode with them, their only train
To guard them on the journey, emmets twain.
Who now withdrew, to hinder not the priest,
Whose presence bland was filling all the feast:
The soft south-wind in summer scents arrayed
Uplifted from the swallow's back the maid,
And wending o'er the open pasture-land
The sandy haunts of conies passing fanned
And brought her to a garden wherein grew
A lily gross beside a dreadful yew.
Much luxury had made the flower pass
The order of its kind: no herb nor grass
Had ever shared the soil with that proud lord,
A wall shut out what gales might blow abroad.
Not builded wall nor door has ever stayed
The wind of Love: the bluebell's bride he laid
Down in the lily's splendid whiteness.—I
Asleep yet knew that never human eye

On mysteries so awful had been turned,
And as I dreamed, with lovely ardours burned.
The timid child of wildness and the sun
Looked for her love, and saw the yew-tree dun,
And at her side the lily's throbbing rod
Yellow and big. Not long though was she odd,
The following airs now brought her eager swain
Even to that white bed, and they again
Were joined. And o'er their union evening drew
Its solemn pall,—with sacrificial dew
Sprinkling the gardened earth ; a silver mist
Around the vessel where the bluebells kissed
Held dimly up the odours dedicate
By wealthy burghers of that sheltered state.
No minister beside the mists of night
Might bear a part in nature's inmost rite.
The bluebells loved themselves to death : and sleep
Abandoned me upon life's loveless steep,—
I woke again beneath the midday ray,
And deeply musing took my homeward way.

THE MISERABLE END OF KING HENRY II.

Though great was the glory of this good king,
'Tis not of his life that I would sing,
Nor the good which his laws to us still bring.

As lord in France of a long domain,
Normandy Anjou and Aquitaine,
He came in his youth to England to reign.

The untamable chieftains of Ireland were bound,
The Lion of Scotland bowed to the ground,
And order was stablished the land around.

But when he had prospered thirty-three years
A catastrophe happened, which melted in tears
Many toughs who had known in their lives no fears.

Jerusalem fell by the Saracen's hand,
The cross of the Saviour was snatched from the land;—
Never after did fortune by Henry stand.

His trusted son Richard seized on the chance—
Prompted by Philip (the wily) of France—
To stir up Anjou and Touraine to a dance.

While Henry lay sick in Le Mans, they beset
That town of his heart; nor did Philip forget
That though he loved Richard, John was his pet.—

When the loss of his town had filled him with dole,
He sent of the rebels a perfect roll:
And the name of John pierced Henry's soul.

Then this mighty king turned his face to the wall,
For three days he uttered no word at all;
Was but one to hear, had he cared to call.

Geoffrey, the love-child of Rosamund,
Watched by his father by sorrow stunn'd;
Whom princes and dukes in his need all shunn'd.

On the fourth day Geoffrey went to the door,
And cried to the world: King Henry's no more!
And made ready the robes, which he seldom wore.

The jewels of indolent royalty
He set on the freckles of sun and of sea,
And the body unformed for ceremony.

Then Richard in haste to the funeral came—
Little time for pomp when a throne's the game,
(John was beyond the feeling of shame).

High he was borne by his soldiers old,
White gloves on his hands and boots of gold,
And the cloth from his hard-set face back-rolled.

All penitent Richard ran forward to peer
Into the countenance once so dear,
Which seemed to be calling him now from the bier.

The blood of the Fulks and the Geoffreys stirred
In Henry's veins, though he spoke no word,—
In the body already as good as interred!

And as still he stared, an agony rose
In Henry, more cruel than strife of blows:
And the Angevin blood burst out at his nose.

On the sumptuous vestments in sight of all
That ominous flood began to fall;
And still he could neither beckon nor call.

My faith they were blind, that company—
"See, Richard is surely of guilt not free;"
They cry, "'tis a heaven-sent testimony!"

They were fools, they were beasts! all mouthing prayer,
Whining to God and praising his care;—
God was busy that day elsewhere!

The blood flowed hot from the nose of the King,
The shovel was heard on the stones to ring;
Oh Ignorance, it is a fearful thing!

HYMN TO JABIM

"And Jabim is the lord of broken things, who sitteth behind the house to lament the things that are cast away. And there he sitteth lamenting the broken things until the worlds be ended, or until someone come to mend the broken things. Or he sitteth by the river's edge to lament the forgotten things that drift upon it.

"A kindly god is Jabim, whose heart is sore if anything be lost."

LORD DUNSANY.

In Jabim I believe,
Who loves to sit and grieve
About the tidal line
Where lays the wasteful brine
Lost strange forgotten things—
To await his sorrowings.
In gutters of the road,
Behind each roofed abode,
Alone among the heaps
Of broken things he weeps;
And blest is he who hears
The everlasting tears.
For he shall love to bend
O'er rubbish, and to mend
For sake of Jabim's eyes
The tin and stuff which lies:
All faded things and odd
Are precious to the god,
The battered jugs and crocks,
Stray wheels and bits of clocks,
Poor chairs who seek a chair
Their scanty weight to bear,
And boots experiencing
The kicks they used to fling.

Bones far upon their way
To unrespecting clay—
Which mingles rabbits then
In one estate with men,
And with the works of men:
Kettles and spades and books
Are strewn where'er he looks,
And Jabim o'er the land
Laments the cunning hand.
Pass on the water flowers
And letters—of the hours
The jettison, barrels, beams,
And corks on all the streams;
The baskets bottomless
And shapes beyond a guess
That floating go—and wait
Some love to change the hate
Of all the gods save one
To common things fordone.
On roads and bridges high
The mighty ones march by,
And none of that array
Will see beneath the way
The little muddy lord,
Nor catch the grievous chord.
Unheard unseen, and sworn
Without reward to mourn
While gods be gods and time
Seek not to change the rime—
Him only I adore,
Along the littered shore
Or on the unowned sod:
Jabim the kindly god!

HARMONY IN R AND N

"To entertain divine Zenocrate."
MARLOWE.

An angel debonair
  Across a dark green land,
Robed in green and vair,
  Springing lute in hand:

Oh to run where stirs
  No hour—a vagrant fine,
And with bright messengers
  In orange groves recline!

DITTY OF CHAUCER'S BEARD

Thou sely growth,
With awe thy curiousness I contemplate
Be this my only oath,
Thy beauty bifurcate.

What joyous spring
Thou, sely thicket, blossomest beside;
What glories eddying
Throughout thy shadows glide!

Thou brushest oft—
Though in those felonies a sely part
Thou play'st—some chin as soft
As thou horrescent art.

What though the airs
Sounding from thy own soil shall never die,
Yet seem ye, sely hairs,
Fiercer to any eye?

TO THE SMALLER FOLK OF MY ROOM

You mice and black-beetles who run round my bed,
You scratch and you fret like the thoughts in my head;
But you never would follow me out of the door,
So good luck to you all, both in love and in war!
Those vexing desires I will trap and pursue,
But this floor I will always hold sacred to you.

DIMINUTIVUS ULULANS

(To John Macnamara.)

Wailing diminutive of me, be still;
Or cry, but spare me that regretful tone,—
Of sorrows elemental waxing shrill,
O you of living things the most alone!
Son, do you thus reproach me and make moan
Because upon Love's chariot I did fly
And a horn winded in the great unknown,
Calling your atoms out to be an I?
Should I have let you in abeyance lie,
Disintegrate another million years?—
Then use your life to teach you how to die
And pass again beyond the reach of tears.
Some day you may forget I dragged you thence,
Perhaps forgive the vast impertinence.

TO LAMBETH BRIDGE

Above the ceaseless pendulum of tide,
Friends with the fog and every wind, sunshine
And darkness, thou dost marvelling abide;
And marvelling hast made all knowledge thine.
Thou knowest every hour by beauty's sign:
The green and purple of the moody stream,
Its course—and flight from the repugnant brine,
Each burden on its back of barge or beam. . .
What truths prefigured in thy memory teem!
Still art thou silent: wilt thou speak at last?
How many silences should I redeem
Broken for wonders thy least tide surpassed,—
Wouldst thou but trust thy heavy heart to me,
As I have made thee my Gethsemane!

LORDSHIP

I sat with Solitude upon a hill,
  Watching the sky in travail of the day :
And with us stayed and watched, and grew less chill,
  The busy morning wind—drawn down to pray.
  The sea below in reverent silence lay,—
All earth was moved to love against its will.
  I saw the beauty of heaven's agony,
  And Greed, with all its brood of monsters, flee.

Then with a smiling heart I bade farewell
  To Solitude, and sought the inland plain,
Where men in pitiless communion dwell ;
Eager was I of Cruelty's flight to tell.
  I reached a town : two passed me with disdain,—
  The citizens were Cruelty and Pain.

TO A RIVER

WHERE IT RUNS DARK AND SLOW
BENEATH A CASCADE.

I

River, of all live things most dull in face,
In voice unmeaning and unmusical:
Have you a soul less dead than your stream's pace
And wear these looks in penance for your fall?—

Not with remorse, I think, these swamps agree
And waters brown, but steady scorn of men;
And unrepentant you shall meet your sea.
Pride after a fall—oh, pride is dreadful then!

Before you knew the conscience of the crowd
And common values judged, you knew no scorn;
Your bubbling stream before ran fair and loud,
Trees waved upon your banks to waving corn.

Oh, if you are more joyful now so harsh,
Help me to please as little as this marsh!

TO A RIVER

WHERE IT RUNS DARK AND SLOW BENEATH A CASCADE

II

River, no hedges full of hedge-life meet
  Your margins, to your waters smilingly
No lawns slope down nor flowering-places neat,
  No hills describe your passage to the sea.

Yet, if you are severe, your frowns mean not
  Deadness of soul, nor prejudice declare :
This lark-full marsh from only loving got
  The unrelenting mien, which few find fair.

In each brown patch of rush a music waits,
  Which at the nod of Spring shall gush between
The earth and heaven and mix them, melting hates
  In love, and making single loves seem mean.

Oh, when such song is making in this marsh,
Keep me from tenderness, make me as harsh !

TO A RIVER

WHERE IT RUNS DARK AND SLOW BENEATH A CASCADE

III

River, no wind but knows your open flat,
  And to you undivided and unturned
Brings knowledge closer streams would shudder at:
  Yet, have you ne'er for pleasant shelters yearned?

Deep you are, but have been no city's way:
  What use in depth? What joy? nor traffic slow
Of lovers loads a current lost to May—
  In solitary sameness vowed to flow.

No, let me answer for you to the fools
  To whom your fixedness so piteous seems!
You chatterers, in those black dreamy pools
  Are all the activities of all the streams.

Imagination you shall call this marsh:
Seek you, for kindness' sake, to be as harsh.

TO A RIVER

WHERE IT RUNS DARK AND SLOW BENEATH A CASCADE

IV

River, why are you beautiful, so bare
  And cheerless? On your wave no shining swan
Makes ruin of no mansions mirrored there. . .
  Unlovely stream!—well loved you long have gone.

And shall go!—By undecorated ways,
  Oft lost to view, you take yourself to sea,
Lack even a name, so little fond of praise:
  Yet not the Nile more worshipful shall be.

No soft occasions tempted you to please
  Any of your lovers ever, fail you none;
Nor, seasons having not, give them unease,—
  You flow to sea, no river more has done.

Oh, if all scenes must cloy except this marsh,
To be as true let me appear as harsh.

TO A RIVER

WHERE IT RUNS DARK AND SLOW BENEATH A CASCADE

V

River, when you so fell, you feared at first
The term of your inquisitive career;
Then into life it seemed that you had burst,
And should be conscious ceasing to be clear.

How, when the waters, which to-day are you,
Are mixed and lost in ocean? These your ways
Shall be as wet: but the particular few
Memories that were a soul. . . Oh soul, give praise!

That riverhood, not rivers, comes to an end:
You shall decay but if you dread the sea
Which mixes. Fall; rain rises to defend
The circle of your perpetuity.

Oh, let me look at time as does this marsh,
And be to individual hopes as harsh!

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